



Torture and Trauma Survivors Service of the NT Inc.



Alternatives to Violence Project

## Alternatives to Violence Program 'Peace Leadership Training'



*Basic Workshop April 2014*



*Basic Workshop March 2014*



*AVP Basic Workshop May 2012*



*AVP Basic Workshop April 2011*

**2014**  
**Report to NT Department of Children and Families**

**by**

**Melaleuca Refugee Centre**

## Community Development Department

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## **ACRONYMS**

CALD	Culturally and linguistically diverse
MRC	Melaleuca Refugee Centre
NT	Northern Territory
AVP	Alternatives to Violence Project
FASSTT	Forum of Australian Services for Survivors of Torture and Trauma
HIPP	Help Increase the Peace Project

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Peace Leadership pilot project funded by the NT Department of Children and Families and managed by Melaleuca Refugee Centre (MRC) has exceeded expectations in terms of outcomes and impact. The project has conducted experiential workshops, in cooperation with the Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP), for both youth and adults and produced facilitators to ensure workshops are held in a manner appropriate to their own age-group (in the case of youth) and community's language and culture. The project has reached the target audiences of emerging refugee communities in Darwin and the networks and reference groups created have supported the running of workshops as well as the adoption of the project by other organisations across Australia.

The project has been in line with many of the key recommendations of the 2011 report by the Multicultural Centre for Women's Health, *On Her Way: Primary prevention of violence against immigrant and refugee women in Australia*<sup>1</sup>. The report recommendations answered by this project include:

- Community leadership involving community leaders – both male and female and of different ages;
- The use of constructive messages and positive images which inspire and empower women and children;
- Consultation with individual refugee communities, to ensure that violence prevention messages, visuals, language and strategies are tailored to each community;
- The use of a variety of communication and social marketing strategies, including community forums;
- Professional training, resources and collaborative networks, to facilitate dialogue about strategies and lessons learned from violence prevention efforts.

Participants have indicated from evaluations that the project has impacted on them in positive ways that are outlined as the key criteria for successful anti-domestic violence programmes and recovery for people who have survived torture and trauma. Participants themselves have indicated steps towards enhanced control, reduced fear and anxiety, restored attachment and connection to others, the offer of emotional support and care, restored dignity and value and reduced excessive shame and guilt in evaluation feedbacks. Although participants have often found it extremely difficult to talk about issues within the family, there has also been a value placed on mixing with different cultures, improved relationships underpinned by respect and effective communication; empowerment to make choices and have a voice; safe, positive and shared parenting and enhanced awareness of self and others.

The youth project (HIP) has similarly been well-received, with positive results noted by both the students and the teachers in helping young people improve their confidence in dealing with conflicts and increased efforts to avert violence between peers at school and in the family at home.

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<sup>1</sup> Poljski C. 2011. *On Her Way: Primary prevention of violence against immigrant and refugee women in Australia*. MCWH: Melbourne.

The project has proven compatible with people who have experienced trauma from many different language groups, cultures and ages (from youth to the elderly), helping people to achieve many of the goals of the recovery framework<sup>2</sup>. The project has managed to eliminate barriers to the equal and full participation of both men and women of refugee background, through the provision of transport, childcare, interpreters and a low reliance on literacy. The workshops have proven themselves to be an effective group work approach to building community and strengthening positive aspects of survivors of torture and trauma that also creates ambassadors for eliminating violence and promoting peace.

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<sup>2</sup> Dr Ida Kaplan. 1998. *Rebuilding Shattered Lives*. Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture Inc.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Melaleuca Refugee Centre is a not-for-profit organization based in Darwin which provides settlement and support services to about 150 newly arrived people in the Northern Territory on humanitarian visas per annum.

Most new arrivals in the Northern Territory to date are from sub Saharan Africa as well as from Burma, Afghanistan and Bhutan. In the Northern Territory these communities are new emerging communities and lack the structure and cohesion that other more established communities from CALD background have. MRC provides support, information, education and advocacy to members of these emerging communities.

MRC provides reception on arrival, orientation, re settlement and housing assistance, socialization, information, advocacy and referral to generic services as well as counselling to survivors of torture and trauma. MRC utilizes a Community Development approach to underpin the strengthening of emerging communities in the NT. This has included a focus on direct community liaison and community engagement in the delivery of services for more than ten years.

MRC is most appreciative of the commitment by the NT Department of Children and Families to deliver this model of conflict management through 2010-14. This innovative program was initiated in 2010 with newly emerging communities of refugee background. The Coordinator has liaised closely with the AVP national network and the program has subsequently been delivered to similar communities in Perth, Brisbane and Sydney. The Peace Leadership Training model has become something of a leader in engaging with people of refugee background.

## BACKGROUND

In 2010-12 MRC, with the support of the NT Department of Children and Families, undertook a pilot project that adapts an internationally recognised model of conflict resolution to emerging communities from refugee background in Darwin. A grant of \$180,000 was provided in a one-off release from the 2009-10 year, to be fully expended by 30 June 2012. The project showed success and was subsequently extended via a further grant of \$92,655 to be fully expended by 30 June 2014, in order to build on the successes of the pilot project.

It was identified that immigrant and refugee women are particularly at risk in cases of domestic violence<sup>3</sup>. “In the Australian context, violence against women occurs among all cultural, religious and socio-economic groups, but women marginalised by age, culture, ethnicity, sexual identity and visa status are more vulnerable to violence and are less likely to have the resources to act to report it.”<sup>4</sup> Reporting is a core aim of the Department of Children and Families, especially with the introduction of mandatory reporting of domestic violence and child abuse. It was considered that an intervention that raises awareness of the unacceptability of different forms of violence, while at the same time raising confidence levels and self-respect of women would reduce barriers to reporting. By doing this at the community group level, peer support is created to reject violence and support reporting. Several factors combine for CALD people that exacerbate, perhaps not the number of incidents, but the experience of violence: limited host-language skills, isolation from and contact with family and community, lack of access to dignified jobs, uncertain legal statuses and experiences with authorities in their origin countries<sup>5</sup>. This is even further compounded for people of refugee background that increase the potential for acts of, or vulnerability to being a victim of violence: the traumatising experiences that lead people to seek asylum, the hardship and trauma associated with flight and camps or detention, and the stressors of resettlement<sup>6</sup>.

Of particular interest, traditionally, efforts to prevent violence against women have been secondary (early intervention) and tertiary (an intervention implemented after violence has occurred) in nature. It was further identified that Darwin did not, at that time, have any coordinated or funded response to these troubling issues. “Whilst it is essential that women experiencing violence are supported, addressing violence in its early stages, or after it has been perpetrated, maintains women’s overall risk of violence and its negative outcomes. Primary prevention attempts to change the culture that allows violence against woman to occur in the first instance”<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Rees & Pease, “Domestic Violence in Refugee Families in Australia”, 2007.

<sup>4</sup> Poljski C. 2011. *On Her Way: Primary prevention of violence against immigrant and refugee women in Australia*. MCWH: Melbourne.

<sup>5</sup> Cecilia Menivar & Olivia Salcido. “Immigrant Women and Domestic Violence - Common Experiences in Different Countries”

<sup>6</sup> Eileen Pittaway. 2004. Occasional Paper 2. “The Ultimate Betrayal: An Examination of the Experience of Domestic and Family Violence in Refugee Communities”

<sup>7</sup> Multicultural Centre for Women’s Health. 2 March 2012. *Fact Sheet 1: Primary prevention of Violence: Good Practice Principles*.

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The aim of this project is to build the capacity of community members to meet individual and family needs in a way that maintains and fosters harmony and non-violence. The project was also aimed at promoting understanding of mandatory reporting of domestic and family violence and of how the NT legal system operates in respect to gender relations and family law. This program is underpinned by the International AVP model, an innovative, preventative approach to engage with communities to reduce the impact of violence and increase community harmony. Workshops use interactive exercises, games and role play. Experienced facilitators across Australia are giving their time and skills to facilitate a series of workshops and Darwin's existing AVP community provide invaluable assistance through co-facilitating workshops.

The Melaleuca program is called "Peace Leadership Training". It highly values the skill and knowledge of community members themselves in facilitating sessions for their own communities in language. The Northern Territory Department of Children and Families funded the project to be delivered to emerging refugee communities, particularly Burundi, Congolese, Liberian, Karen, Somali and Sudanese community members.

MRC's strengths include close links to diverse refugee communities and a proven ability to use community development approaches. MRC developed and trialled a local participatory approach underpinned by AVP. Community engagement around development of a refugee AVP approach was the initial phase, followed by establishing and maintaining a series of workshops under the AVP model, while building human capacity in emerging communities to continue and expand upon the work of the Peace Leadership project.

The Peace Leadership project had the following aims:

**Goal:** Raise awareness of domestic and family violence

**Outcome 1:** Deliver a number of experiential workshops to explore and develop non-violent alternatives to conflict resolution

**Output 1.1:** Deliver a minimum of 4 basic, 1 advanced and 1 facilitator workshops of the Alternatives to Violence program to a range of cultural groups, as appropriate

**Outcome 2:** Provide specialised AVP basic, advanced and facilitator training

**Output 2.1:** Provide AVP training for bicultural facilitators and identify key cultural representatives

**Outcome 3:** Develop a reference group to provide additional program assistance and support

**Output 3.1:** Utilise collaborative networks to enhance program delivery and outcomes

**Output 3.2:** Undertake use of community development strategies to engage cultural communities in planning for and delivering the AVP groups

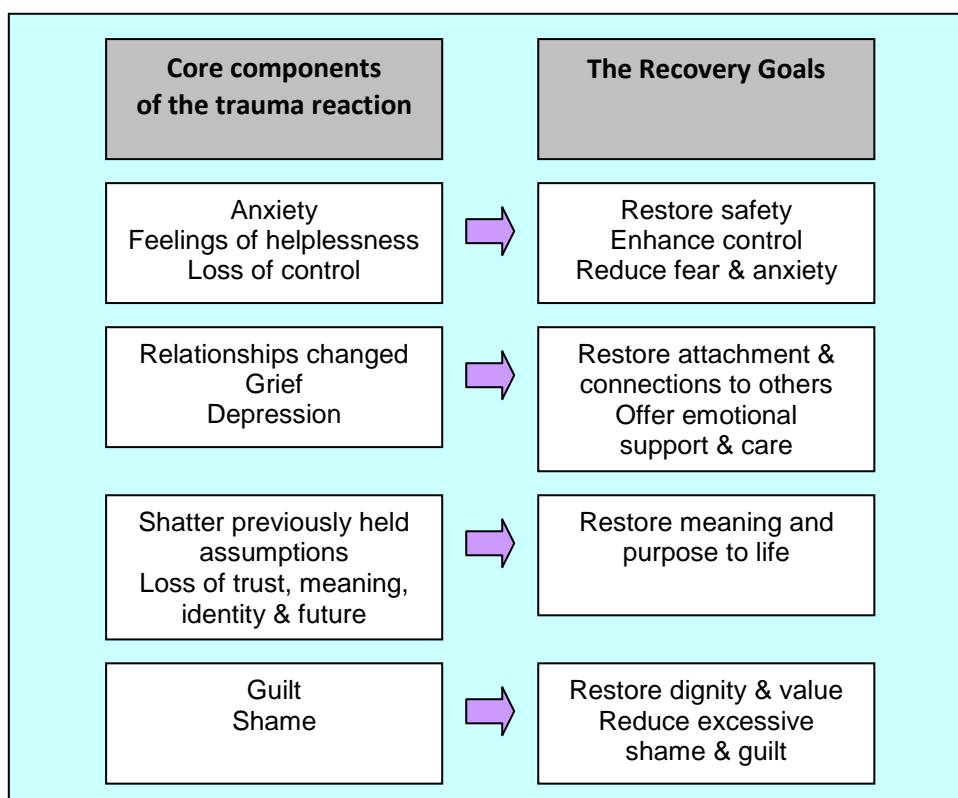
**Outcome 4:** Monitor and evaluate AVP

With the intended results for project participants being:

- a) Develop respect for self and others (empathy)
- b) Develop critical social skills (interpersonal trust, communication)







Moreover, not only do the goals of the project contribute to recovery goals for trauma and torture survivors and people of refugee background generally, they also contribute closely to the goals of domestic violence prevention programs.

“In some immigrant and refugee communities, direct discussion about domestic violence is difficult due to the belief that family violence is a private matter”<sup>10</sup>. While AVP workshops do not specifically and openly discuss domestic and family violence as opposed to all types of violence, according to a Durham University study conducted on domestic violence perpetrator programs, there are six key criteria for a successful programme: an improved relationship between partners which is underpinned by respect and effective communication; partners are empowered to make choices and have a voice; safety and freedom from violence and abuse for women and children; safe, positive and shared parenting and enhanced awareness of self and others, including an understanding of the impact of domestic violence on partners and children<sup>11</sup>. When looking at the results of the project and highlighted positive impact of the project on participants through workshop evaluation surveys, many of these issues are highlighted by participants themselves as something that the workshops have helped them to work towards.

<sup>10</sup> Poljski C. 2011. *On Her Way: Primary prevention of violence against immigrant and refugee women in Australia*. MCWH: Melbourne. p 54.

<sup>11</sup> Westmarland, Kelly and Chadler-Mills. 2010. “Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programmes. What Counts as Success?” Durham University.

## PROJECT OUTCOMES

**Outcome 1:** Deliver a number of experiential workshops to explore and develop non-violent alternatives to conflict resolution

**Output 1.1:** Deliver a minimum of 12 basic, 3 advanced and 3 facilitator workshops of the Alternatives to Violence program to a range of cultural groups, as appropriate (as a total from 2010 to 2014)

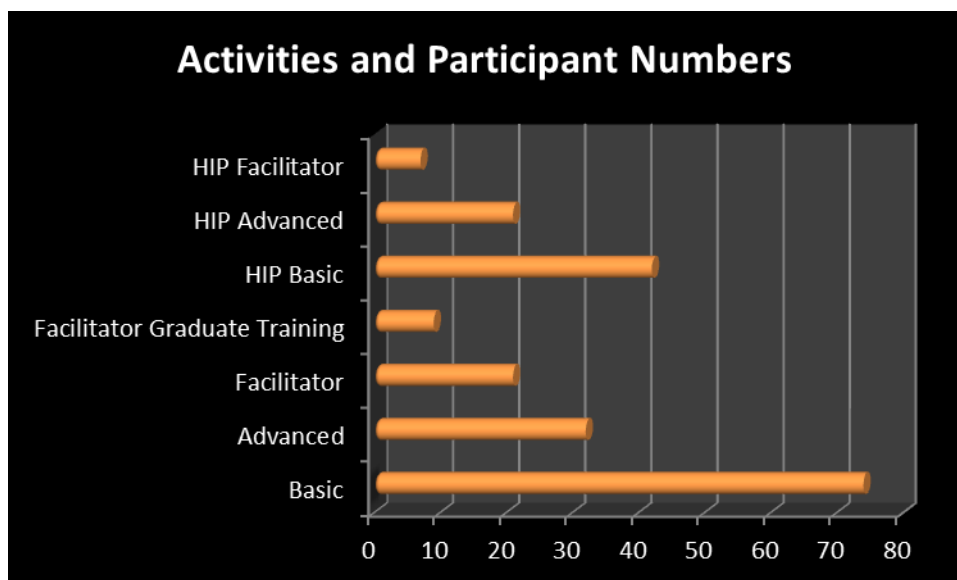
Since 2010, 22 workshops have been held – 14 Basic, 4 Advanced, 4 Training for Facilitator and 2 Facilitator Graduate Training workshops have been delivered to adults and young people. The number of people requesting to participate in a workshop has been greater, and, with savings from venue, childcare and other costs, when available, the project has been able to conduct more workshops than required. The project, called “Peace Leadership Training”, worked with facilitators from communities who had completed all levels of the program to in turn deliver these intensive experiential workshops, including a specialised program for young people.

**Outcome 2:** Provide specialised AVP basic, advanced and facilitator training

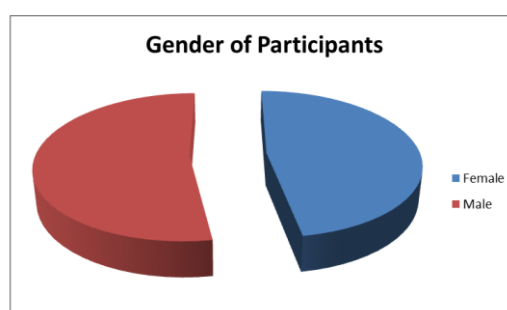
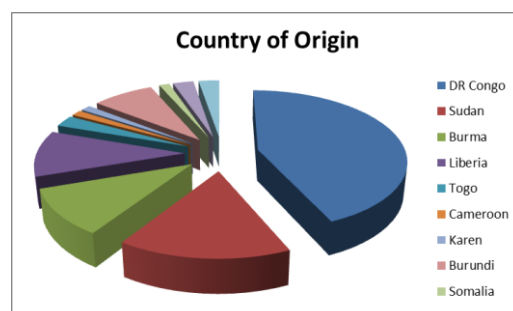
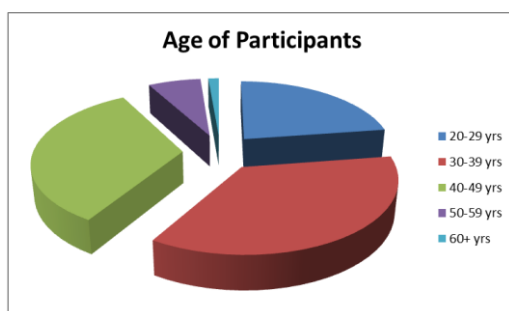
**Output 2.1:** Provide AVP training for bicultural facilitators and identify key cultural representatives

A strategy of the program was to extend opportunities to as many participants as possible to complete the Facilitator Training and co-facilitate a workshop. The experience of co-facilitating is yet another opportunity to experience positive reinforcement and strengthen even further the building blocks of cooperation, communication, affirmation and community building from the workshops themselves. 19 of the 20 adult participants (10 men and 10 women) who have completed their facilitator training have already co-facilitated a workshop, with another 1 facilitator to facilitate a workshop by the end of this financial year. Within the youth program, called Help Increase Peace Project – HIPP, 6 of the 7 young facilitators have helped deliver a workshop to their peers with support from senior facilitators and an adult facilitator of refugee background. Of particular note, 11 of the 20 facilitators are current community leaders (male and female) within their respective communities (covering 7 distinct groups). As HIPP workshops are open to all students, with a requirement of at least 30% of students being of refugee background, it is positive to see that 43% of students have been of refugee background.

The rate of those who continue on to advanced workshops, showing their enthusiasm for the workshop and their interest in improving their relationships and capacities in finding peaceful pathways is 42% for adult workshops and 50% in workshops for students. As attendance at workshops is voluntary, this is an extremely positive sign that workshops are well received and useful to participants.



In a reflection of the communities of people of refugee background in Darwin, the two largest groups (52% and 19%) of participants in adult workshops have been from the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan respectively, followed by Burma (11%), Liberia (13%), Burundi (9%) and the Karen State in Burma (3%). The majority of participants (81%) over the past three years have been aged between 30-49 years of age. These are families with several young children each, many with both parents working. They are also, as relatively new arrivals, without extended family, unable to rely upon extended family for childcare. Therefore, Melaleuca has provided childcare for each workshop, to allow people who wish to participate, a chance to do so with the peace of mind of knowing that their children are safe and eliminating one of the main barriers to women attending.

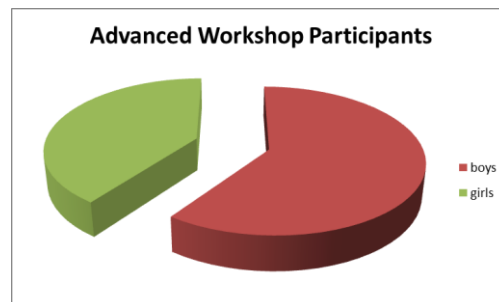
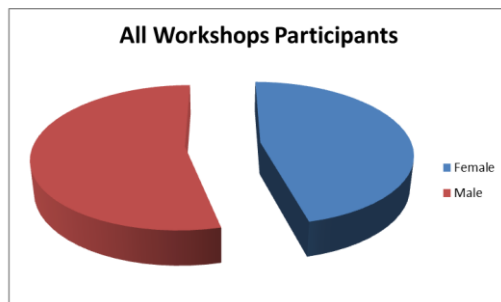


There has been a continuously good mix of both male and female participants, with 53% males and 47% females attending workshops. It is important to the program and workshops to have a good gender balance of participants and facilitators (there

is always a gender balance in facilitators as well, with at least one female and one male facilitator each workshop) in order to ensure that all activities and discussions on conflict take into account gender roles and different gender perspectives. Many of the activities within the workshop also highlight personal and family relationships, allowing people to explore issues of domestic and family conflicts, while allowing participants to control the level of discussion, maintaining privacy and safety within a two-day workshop.

Youth workshops, as they were conducted in Sanderson Middle School, are open to youth ranging in age from 11 to 15 years of age. There has also been a good balance of the percentage of boys and girls participating in all workshops, with 54% boys and 46% girls participating. The refugee background of students was ascertained from the school or Melaleuca Refugee Centre data and 43% of all participants were of refugee background.

Of particular interest, the percentage of boys who stayed with the program and continued on to advanced and facilitator training workshops was much larger than girls, with 60% boys in Advanced and 86% boys in Facilitator Training workshops.



## OTHER SUPPORTING ACTIVITIES

**Outcome 3:** Develop a reference group to provide additional program assistance and support

**Output 3.1:** Utilise collaborative networks to enhance program delivery and outcomes

**Output 3.2:** Undertake use of community development strategies to engage cultural communities in planning for and delivering the AVP groups

Several activities have been held to support the foundation of the project – the Basic, Advanced and Training for Facilitators workshops. These activities have been the creation of circles of reference and involvement in networks to expand the knowledge base and reach of the Peace Leadership program in Darwin and beyond.

### CIRCLE OF REFERENCE



Circle of Reference attendees evolve in response to the theme of the meeting. Each session is created to focus on particular challenges for service and policy organisations working in the field of domestic violence, conflict resolution and/or with people of refugee background. The theme of the meeting reflects priorities identified through consultation with the Community Facilitators Reference Group.

Each meeting includes community building and communication activities that reflect the typical elements of an AVP workshop. This raises awareness of the experiential model and builds community amongst attendees. The number of attendees ranges from 8-18 depending on the topic being discussed and circle of reference meetings are held at least twice a year.

As a community development approach, this is a deliberate effort to bring together professional service providers with client community members with specialised insight and expertise. Sessions have covered: the impact of trauma on the individual, and subsequently the family and community; the central role of relationships in the experience of trauma and in recovery; the reality of torture, as well as the resilience and strength of survivors; the refugee experience; youth and the refugee experience; the applicability of the AVP model with users and survivors of violence potentially in the same workshop; the barriers to through-care of domestic violence cases following the first response of the police; the elements of effective preventative interventions in the domestic violence field and the challenges of cross-cultural work at a community level. The key focus has been to exchange learning across sectors and specialties, as well as supporting the project to generate as much potential as possible from the activities.

A **Community Reference Group** was formed to discuss the nature and range of conflicts in the communities. Representatives from the following communities have been present: Burmese, Liberian, Togolese, Democratic Republic of Congo and

Burundi. Numerous small group and individual meetings have since occurred with community leaders who function as conduits of information to their members, and as a consequence of following up referrals to community members experiencing conflict.

Issues identified are outlined below as the following themes:

- Money Worries (managing the rising cost of housing and the need to find a good job soon after arriving in Darwin),
- Isolation (dealing with the isolation caused by trauma and a new culture and place to fit into),
- Networks outside Darwin, such as maintaining relationships with people even after they have left Darwin, or reducing the isolation of being in Darwin, far from any other capital cities in Australia,
- Communication,
- Work Environment,
- Belonging to Different Communities (valuing diversity/broken communities/neighbourhood),
- Inter-generational Issues (as the children grow into their adolescent years adapting to the English language and Australian culture and parents are challenged to support them during a difficult stage of the life cycle, and during the unsettling resettlement period),
- Community Leadership (managing the dynamics among members of small, emerging *communities* (example being harmful gossip) which can be a result of, or intensified by, social and psychological reactions to trauma (anxiety, guilt, shame, loss of trust),
- Marital stress (as the couple manage the challenge of resettlement and work through their own traumatic histories, whilst living in a system with significantly different gender roles and responses to marital conflict than their 'home' culture),
- Inter-personal Conflict and Individual/Self Care.

**The Community Facilitators Reference Group** was formed to support the enthusiasm for and growth of Peace Leadership in Darwin. The group is formed by AVP Darwin facilitators and Peace Leadership apprentice facilitators to discuss issues related to workshops, the growth of AVP Darwin and Peace Leadership, the changing needs of the communities of people of refugee background and opportunities to support the growth of Peace Leadership and AVP in Darwin.

Outcomes include:

- creating a gathering held the first Friday of every month. This meeting is open to anyone, with the purpose of providing facilitators and previous participants an opportunity to remember and practice the skills they have gained from workshops, and to introduce new people to the AVP lens, generating interest in future workshops. It is also an opportunity to consult facilitators to provide guidance, cultural input and direct assistance in engaging with community members to participate;
- discussing with members each of the issues highlighted by the community reference group and model positive ways to respond to such conflicts;

- engaging with community leaders outside of the AVP circle of facilitators and participants to discuss issues/conflicts and ways to overcome them;
- engaging with AVP in countries of origin experiencing intense violence and conflict, to build relationships directly between the community facilitators and the wider international AVP network of facilitators;
- creating an opportunity to share knowledge at a national level and to participate in intensive advanced workshop exploring trauma, a key factor underlying conflict for people in newly emerging refugee communities;
- providing guidance in planning basic, advanced and training for facilitator level workshops for adults and for young people - the timing, order and key persons and leaders to engage;
- identifying the emerging areas of conflict in the school environment and targeting sub-groups of participants to join workshops;
- identifying and engaging child-carers, drivers and cooks from each community to support attendance at the two full day intensive workshop;
- the creation of a series of newsletters to sustain the link to past learnings and to retain connections among facilitators and graduates between workshops; and
- two trainee community facilitators successfully applied for scholarships to participate in the January 2013 National AVP conference in Canberra. They prepared and delivered a presentation session linking their past history of significant trauma and conflict with the efficacy of the AVP model.

## NETWORKS

The Program Coordinator participated in networks central to the field of domestic violence, refugee communities or the alternatives to violence program. The most significant networks are the:

- **Domestic and Family Violence Network** monthly meetings to raise awareness of the project, and share knowledge of issues for those of refugee background; seek any referrals of potential participants; raise awareness of future workshops being conducted for specific communities in language; and note that there would be potential for issues relating to personal, family and community conflict to be addressed in an innovative way through this pilot project;
- In 2011, the Program Coordinator gave a presentation to community members, government agencies and service organisations at the '**Prevention of Violence against Immigrant and Refugee Women**' seminar organized by General Practice Network NT. This comprised an informational session discussing the risk of conflict within refugee families during the resettlement phase, the trauma recovery framework and the potential of the Alternatives to Violence project;
- **Respectful Relationships Coordination Network** was initiated in 2012 to ensure organisations have accurate information about each program, avoid duplication and target the schools/organisations in a coherent manner;
- **Refugee Support Network** three-monthly meetings including inviting referrals, and sharing knowledge of the arising needs of refugee communities;



- **AVP Darwin** volunteer organisation including joining as an executive member, ensuring the group has sufficient capacity to expand opportunities for refugee and mainstream participants to come together, gaining substantial advice as well as volunteer co-facilitators for the Melaleuca workshops. This has assisted the Darwin AVP community to progress through the initial early growth phase and into consolidation;
- **AVP Australia Network** of state representatives meets monthly via Skype. The Program Coordinator has been a key member and co-represents the NT. In 2012, the Program Coordinator delivered two sessions at the Asia West Pacific Regional Gathering in Perth. This increased the knowledge of existing AVP facilitators and the national network's capacity to guide and support the AVP project at Melaleuca. Outcomes have been to gain specialised advice from the most experienced program developers and coordinators in Australia and internationally, to access a concise version of the AVP manual developed specifically for work with the participants of refugee background as well as for youth, an Advanced AVP workshop tailored to participants recovering from trauma, support local refugee facilitators, gain scholarship funding to attend a national AVP conference and senior AVP facilitators experienced in cross-cultural and post-trauma work offering their services unpaid to the Melaleuca project;
- **Peace Leadership Program Network** was created in 2012 to draw together a body of expertise in utilising the AVP program with people of refugee background. Melaleuca has been the front-runner in this area and has provided presentations, shared knowledge and resolved practice issues as AVP programs have subsequently commenced in Perth, Brisbane and Sydney. Since the start of similar programs around Australia, the Perth based facilitator has visited parallel programs in Africa in 2012-13 and is creating opportunities for facilitators in Australia and Africa to build their relative expertise of working with participants with a recent history of violence and trauma.



Facilitator Training March 2013 –  
Christine Mandou, Apprentice Facilitator  
Elizabeth Kwan, AVP Darwin  
Richard Denning, AVP Queensland  
Frederick Wangezono, Interpreter

It is acknowledged that the guidance, time and expertise of senior AVP facilitators has been a vital and incalculable contribution to all AVP activities, particularly in support of the growth of the Peace Leadership program in not only the Northern Territory, but also New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia.

## Outcome 4: Monitor and evaluate AVP

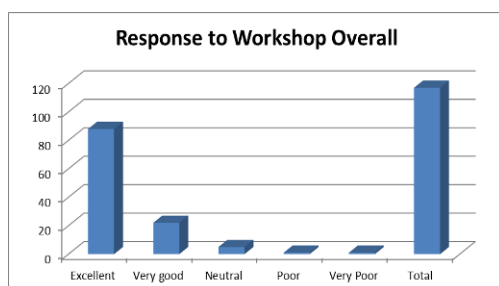
In order to evaluate and ensure the continued improvement of the project, workshop evaluations were conducted for each participant and in-depth interviews were conducted with community facilitators, the principal and teachers involved in workshops at Sanderson Middle School and prominent community members who had participated in workshops.

Different types of questions were asked between adult AVP and youth HIPP workshops, related satisfaction with the individual workshop, and then several open-ended questions in order to capture the use of the knowledge and skills gained in workshops by participants in their lives. In-depth interviews were aimed at gaining a deeper insight into the impact of the workshop on participants in their lives after the workshops and the positive aspects of becoming a peace leader in their community.

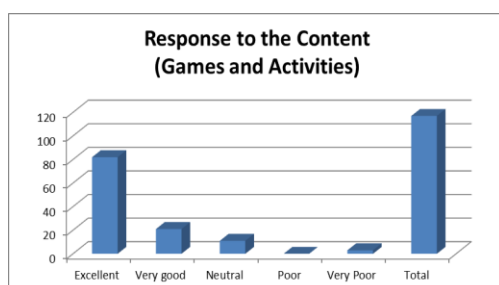
### ADULT COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

In adult workshops, 117 responses were collected from a total of 139 participants in all levels of workshops, comprising 84% of evaluation feedback. Where possible, evaluations were given in native languages and translated and assistance given to those with low literacy. Participants were asked to answer each of the following questions on a simple scale from very poor, poor, good, very good to excellent:

1. What did you think of the workshop?
2. What did you think of the content of the workshop?
3. What did you think about the way facilitators lead the workshop?



75% of respondents rated the workshop as excellent, with 19% rating it as very good and the remaining 6% rating the workshop overall as good to very poor.



88% of respondents rated the content of the workshops as excellent or very good, with 9% rating the contents as average (neutral) and only 3% rating the content as very poor.



90% of respondents rated the facilitation technique as excellent or very good, with 9% rating the facilitation as average (neutral) and only 1% rating the facilitation as poor.

This shows an overwhelmingly positive response to the workshops, content and facilitation technique. Participants usually start off at the beginning of workshops unsure and unclear on the style and purpose of workshops, but gain great insight and comfort in the style used by the end of the workshops. Of particular note, in workshops where trainee community facilitators were delivering activities for the first time to their peers, the perception of the quality of facilitation was still extremely positive. The experiential training, mentoring and preparation built into the model are a foundation for positive results, even in the testing context of two full days of intensive workshop.

Self-reported outcomes collected from surveys conducted at the end of each workshop, as well as in-depth interviews of participants and apprentice facilitators since 2010 indicate that participants have valued several of the key criteria for successful anti-domestic violence programmes as well as the criteria for trauma recovery of people of refugee background. Participants themselves have highlighted enhanced control, reduced fear and anxiety, restored attachment and connection to others, the offer of emotional support and care, restored dignity and value and reduced excessive shame and guilt in evaluation feedbacks. Although participants have often found it extremely difficult to talk about issues within the family, there has also been a value placed by participants on mixing with different cultures, improved relationships underpinned by respect and effective communication; empowerment to make choices and have a voice; safe, positive and shared parenting and enhanced awareness of self and others.

### Learning Approach

The program uses a selection of experiential activities, using different learning styles, and then integrating our understanding through listening to and processing others' responses. The approach attempts to reduce intellectualising about topics, shifting to the personal; to unplanned reactions and immersion in unanticipated activity. Some activities purposefully generate tension and conflicts, not all generate all positive feelings; yet the comments repeatedly reflect an appreciation for the fun and enjoyment experienced:

*"Participation was the best for me in all activities that were also entertaining."*

*"Everything was good for me and inside me because I was very happy."*

*"Some good but others annoying. Plenty of games of organisational skills."*

*"I enjoyed everything and I had fun at the workshop."*

*"... all was very useful and I enjoy it."*

*"I really enjoyed my time here"*



Basic Workshop, June 2011: Tar Mla Say and Aline, graduating, with Julie Korner (AVP New South Wales)

## **New Links and Open Minds**

Forming links with people from other cultures, or just from outside their own community can be very supportive and confidence-building for people, as this allows them to not only open their minds to other ways of thinking about and dealing with conflicts, but also provides them with support to go against the community traditions and form new traditions in a new land. The opportunity for participants to mix with other cultures and appreciate diversity seems strong in workshops, as indicated by the following statements:

*"Increasing my understanding through mixing with different cultures."*

*"Everything is the best: sharing with different cultures."*

*"Best group workshop with different cultural group and I called this workshop colourful."*

*"For me is knowing different people...", "It was very beneficial to have people from different cultures come together. It really made me frame conflict and its transformation differently"*

*"more multicultural learning- excellent learning for all"*

*'The best thing about the workshop, enjoying togetherness, different cultures, different languages'*

*"it was really important to have the mix of cultures in order to better understand power and what it means to different people"*



Diverse group in November 2012 workshop

## **Reduced Fear and Anxiety**

### **Restored Attachment and Connection to Others**

We also know that relationships in communities can be characterised by mistrust as a result of past violence and trauma. The workshops help participants to restore attachment and connections to others, which, in turn, helps to reduce fear and anxiety:

*"Learn from each country, it was good for the workshop. Everyone was respectful, we are all friends and united."*

*"More new ideas and make new friends and learn new things."*

*"Everything was good and I made new friend and also learn new thing."*

*"Learn new things and make new friends, get new ideas."*

*"Sharing ideas and meeting new friends."*

*"working together and sharing- not being stressed and alone"*

*"The most inside change is working as a team"*

*"seeing myself fit in with team members"*

*"The workshop help and gave me the skills to solve problem, teamwork, behaviour management."*

*“Everyone’s view was taken positively without criticisms. That makes one feel accepted.”*

*“Changed my bad feelings. Relieved my worries and stress. Support from a friendly group.”*



Experienced senior facilitator Sally Herzfeld (AVPWA) facilitates an activity in the November Advanced Workshop.

### **Improved Relationships**

#### **Respect and Effective Communication**

While domestic violence is a subject most people of refugee background find difficult to discuss openly, quite a few participants have indicated specifically that an improved relationship between partners which is underpinned by respect and effective communication. For example:

*“It will help how to interact with friends and families.”*

*“How to communicate properly in order to avoid grudge-and to have a heart of forgiving.”*

*‘Before I used to think that everyone should respect and listen [to] me. However, I have learnt from this workshop that all people are the same and we all need to respect each other’.*



Burma/Liberia workshop in May 2012

### **Enhanced Awareness of Self and Others**

Many participants indicated an enhanced awareness of self and others after the workshop:

*“The change about me is as me, because some of the workshop we work together as a group. I have learned that something that change me a lot such as respect, patient, caring, working together and last but not least making new friends.”*

*“I used to get angry often but now I don’t especially when I remember the fifth part of the mandala.”*



*"The changes which I received were related with learning on how to have unity and a spirit of respect, being respected and how to respect others."*

*"I have to be more respect to myself. Caring for others, ask for non-violent solution, think before reacting..."*

*'The workshop has increased my ability [to] think, which is very useful when I'm in trouble. If there is a problem, I now know that I need to find out the source of the issue and then I can decide which way can be used to solve it. My intention is to see all people living in peace and harmony'.*

### **Empowerment to Make Choices and Have a Voice**

AVP workshops originated for violent offenders, but the demand for the workshops extended to prison officers and the general community, also helping people who are normally quieter and less confident, empowering them to make choices and have a voice:

*"I feel comfortable to talk to some who have a problem with me in a peaceful way. Confident."*

*"It taught me how to look after myself and how to answer another person who is angry especially their 'red' section."*

*"Speaking louder and clear; Having confident."*

*"My self-confidence; group sharing; practice being vulnerable."*

*"Improve on shyness by building confidence; Concentration and practice."*

*"My skills as a facilitator – i.e. not to hide my light under a bushel!"*

*"Pride, sense of belonging to a multicultural, multilingual community. Honesty and safety in openness."*



Fatmata Mansaray, Baindu Kiazolu, Christine Mandou, Justine Mickle debriefing a practice facilitation session within their team.

### **Restored Dignity and Value Reduced Excessive Shame and Guilt**

In a long form interview, a community facilitator reflected particularly an experience as a change due to the workshops and becoming a facilitator as restored dignity & value and reduced excessive shame & guilt:

*"I had a little bit of disadvantage. I've never been recognised because you can't do what I've done without embarrassment. My family turned around and don't give title of respect. It (the workshops) helped me to keep going with the situation and to see the next human beings around me and life to keep going. That's a specific thing that happened."*



Facilitator Training March 2013: Dancing

### **Enhanced Control**

Participants have mentioned key phrases concerning improved self-control, tolerance and patience, contributing to improved safety and freedom from violence for themselves and others:

*I am more patient with self and others. I am a better listener...*

*It is amazed that I have learned a lot of things regarding different situations in the community. Problem solving.*

*More kindness, less judgemental - more patient, willing to take + receive leadership.*

*Having patience in a cross cultural situation. I learned that I am tolerant and inclusive.*

*"...in my family. And the way how to behaved when anger has taken me up, it also make me know the root cause of the conflict, and the step taken to solve it."*

*"My husband said he's proud of me and he trusts me. The training has changed me. I am not only learning I am doing it. I am getting respect from other people."*

*"I want to be an exemplar...instead of talking anger first I need to calm down. People see your attitude after two workshops and (you) start changing your lifestyle...other people adopt ...see what you do...they can sit with their family and solve their problems."*

### **The Offer of Emotional Support and Care**

This shift is reflected in the 'Most Significant Change Stories' elicited from facilitator graduates. The Program Coordinator interviewed participants, focused on eliciting examples, if any, of how the workshop had changed the way they had responded to conflict. Each respondent focused on resolving a dispute amongst close family members, reportedly using a different strategy than they would have previously. This suggests that the outcomes of the workshop experience are being applied to conflicts within families, contributing to resolving or de-escalating existing disputes.

Excerpts from one participant's story are provided below:

*"It was very very strong. I passed one week everyday on the phone. Not to make the problem... to bring the problem to eye level, but to make the problem down. Therefore all night I think about what I want to do.*

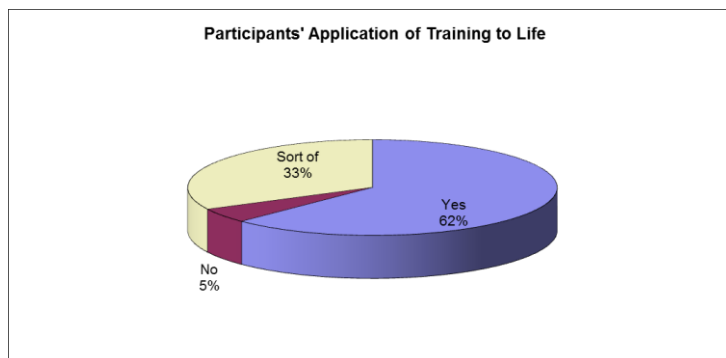
*To "Expect the best" ... "Thinking before reacting" and "Respect each other." Respect my [close family members]. And because... before I can't do that. I say in my heart I want to do like that. Peace leadership tell me to."*

## YOUTH WORKSHOPS

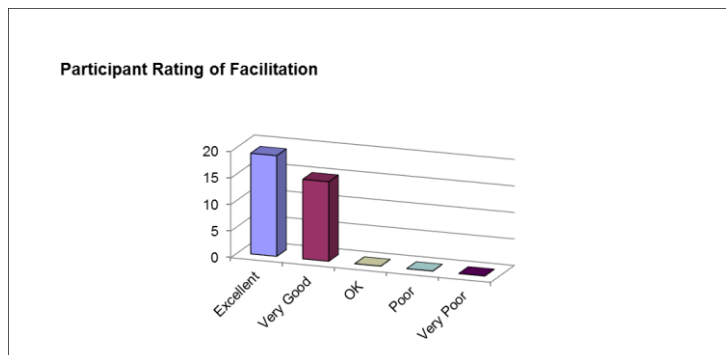
Youth Workshop participants were given a slightly different set of questions in the workshop evaluation survey and focus group discussions, often held some weeks after the workshop. These evaluations did not always capture all student participants, as workshops were often held at the end of the term, or end of the year, and follow-up evaluations taking place the following year would miss students who had already moved on to another school. However, at 65% of student participants have responded over the years, and these responses are captured below.

Participants were asked two questions that could be quantitated:

- 'Have you used anything from the workshop in your life?', and
- 'Rate the quality of the facilitation'



62% and 33% of respondents said that they had used or 'sort of' used the training in their life. Only 5% of respondents said they had not used anything from the training in their life.



No respondent said the workshop facilitation was any less than very good.

The young participants were generally enthusiastic participants in the focus group discussions held several months after the workshop and came voluntarily in their own free time during school. Although unprompted, the majority would specify a core strategy learned in the workshop. The majority identified strategies relating to 'think before reacting' and 'caring for others' as something they now do differently because of the workshop. Examples were provided that related to conflicts between peers at school, and efforts to avert violence, while many others have stated that they used what they had experienced in family and home situations:

*"I learned how not to give up to find a way."*

*"How to respect yourself and expect the best."*

*"I stopped getting angry...it made me less angry."*

*"If I never went I would have hit him quicker."*

*"I talk to my family differently."*

*"I stopped hitting my brother."*

*"Stop punching, walk away and think first."*



*“Having a problem in their families and they can get something from it and go and talk to their parents and maybe their big brother because when you are younger you have no power and do not usually get that power.”*

*“Anyone who is facing conflicts at school.”*

The facilitators and school representatives involved in workshops had acute observations about the value of peer facilitating:

*“But teenagers listen to other teenagers and they won’t listen to adults...”*

*“It genuinely feels like it is run by the students. Lots of programs make the claim and talk about being student led...but it’s not (when) the facilitators do it, students are mouth pieces.”*

*“Clearly (here) it was working with the students...on facilitator skills... some just did the **best!** The level of respect between the kids just went up.”*

The school has supported students moving through the levels and identifying a range of young people to participate, with a preference to those of refugee background. Participants themselves were enthusiastic about identifying fellow students who ‘needed’ to attend, and recommended and encouraged participation. A community facilitator also linked students to the workshop based on insight into their issues around managing conflict non-violently.

Although unprompted, the majority would specify a core strategy learned in the workshop, of which the following three were most prominent:

### **Care for Others**

- *Now at home, when my brother hits me, I think before I act and I am able to walk away.*
- *Before the workshop, I am not sure if I cared for others, now I do.*
- *I have been really caring more for my brothers and sisters and my mum too. I feel that I have started to care more for my family after the workshop; it helped me to think about getting along...:*
- *My brother has stopped being nasty and mean, because I am being nicer to him! I have associated more with people who help me a lot...*

### **Think Before Reacting**

- *Learnt how to control my anger. I would usually shout or hit at others now after the workshop I have learnt to think before I react.*
- *When I get angry now, I don’t go and punch and out of my way to hurt. I think before I react and try to talk to them before...*
- *I don’t get angry and am proud of myself when I don’t get angry.*
- *If I get angry, I’ve learn to talk first, I thought that I wasn’t going to like it...Ms G made me do it, but it was actually really good! The five have really helped me – it really helped!*
- *To help reduce conflict in the family by listening and waiting to understand the issue before jumping in and trying to solve the problem (a core strategy is to think before reacting).*

### **Respect for Self**

- *I never expected the best, I often have self-thoughts, "I am going to fail", but the workshop has helped me change my self-thought... like to positive thinking.*
- *It changed my feelings towards being nice to others, it has helped me manage my feelings when I've been bullied...respect myself respect my teachers and respect my brothers... respecting ME.*
- *The keys help me when I'm in a bad mood, feeling lonely and uncommunicative*
- *[This program] tries to give kids the power and confidence to talk up instead of being shy like me...I have to improve my confidence and it is really hard because where I used to live, I never went to school.*

Others specified general changes as a consequence of the workshop experience, for example:

*"Faced big stuff at school in the past. Now I feel I can handle it better."*

*"I gave the [strategies] to my youth group to use (name of group) they use them all the time."*

*"We learnt to trust people, not to tease and how to have fun."*

*"Never give up is a strong sentence for me. I'm really happy now."*

*"This is just a great program to help increase the peace and help people learn about themselves and how to control themselves, so that when they grow up, life will be easier."*

The feedback from both the school principal and teachers has been positive, citing specific changes they have observed in participants, and noting the shift from the usual response to conflicts (particularly physical and verbal violence) in the school. This was reflected by the results of the focus group discussions.

One teacher who participated in a few workshops reflected:

*"I have seen some really wonderful changes in the students I work with since they participated in the workshops. There is one girl who has done the workshops before, and she is having problems at school with another student. She came to me and pulled out the card with the keys on it and said "I've tried this key and this key and this one, but it is still not working. Please help me." This shows that she has been working through all the keys to try to find a peaceful solution and now she is asking for help from outside."*

## CONCLUSION

The Peace Leadership project has achieved all outcomes as outlined in the project service agreement, conducting 23 workshops, producing 20 adult facilitators (10 men and 10 women) and 7 youth facilitators (6 boys and 1 girl) to conduct workshops in a manner appropriate to their own community's language, culture and/or age. More than half of those that have become facilitators have been or are acting as community leaders (male and female) for their respective communities, strengthening the messages of conflict management, harmonious relationships and mutual respect to all community members through their leaders. The project has reached the target audiences of emerging communities and networks and reference groups have supported the running of workshops as well as the adoption of the project by other organisations across Australia<sup>12</sup>.

Participants have indicated from evaluations that the project has impacted on them in positive ways. These ways are also outlined as the key criteria for successful anti-domestic violence and primary prevention programmes as well as the goals of recovery for people who have survived torture and trauma. Participants themselves have indicated steps towards enhanced control, reduced fear and anxiety, restored attachment and connection to others, the offer of emotional support and care, restored dignity and value and reduced excessive shame and guilt in evaluation feedbacks. Although participants have often found it extremely difficult to talk about issues within the family, there has also been a value placed on mixing with different cultures, improved relationships underpinned by respect and effective communication; empowerment to make choices and have a voice and enhanced awareness of self and others.

The youth project (HIP) has similarly been well-received, with positive results noted by both the students and the teachers in helping young people improve their confidence in dealing with conflicts and increased efforts to avert violence between peers at school and in the family at home.

The project has proven compatible with people who have experienced trauma from many different language groups, cultures and ages (from youth to the elderly), helping people to progress towards many of the goals of the recovery framework. The project has managed to eliminate barriers to the equal and full participation of both men and women of refugee background, through the provision of transport, childcare, interpreters and a low reliance on literacy. The workshops have proven themselves to be an effective group work approach to building community and strengthening positive aspects of survivors of torture and trauma that also begins the process of creating ambassadors for eliminating violence and promoting peace.

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.startts.org.au/training/community-development-and-other-training/community-development-evening-presentations/resolving-differences-in-communities-2/>